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*Interchange*, an externally refereed educational quarterly, embraces educational theory, research, analysis, history, philosophy, policy and practices. The journal seeks to foster exchanges among practitioners, policy-makers and scholars and to provide a forum for comment on issues and trends in education. The journal specializes in frank argumentative articles on the fundamental purposes of education. Its articles typically challenge conventional assumptions about education and higher education and do so from perspectives in philosophy or the social sciences. A special feature is the publishing of responses, and frequency response to responses, in the same issue as the article which provoked them. Its authors are scattered throughout the world.

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to sidestep such big issues, but limits her political-economic prescriptions to such phrases as “*authentically* competitive society” (p. 170) and “*effective* equality of opportunity” (p. 175). The “built-in doubter” that Hutcheon says all of us need to develop (p. 201) should be alerted to such adjectival comforters. Even engineers and other users of “*authentically scientific* social science” (p. 220) cannot escape the messy, but imaginative, work of democratic politics. It might be that democratic character and culture are not as much *built* as they are imagined, invented, and invited forth.

Different metaphors evoke different sensibilities. Hutcheon’s *Building Character and Culture* points us systematically, provocatively, and, albeit, insufficiently to a social engineering framework. If we do not want our children to turn into self-absorbed, media-manipulated, monsters, this may be the place to start. We have to go beyond it, however, for probing the deeper questions that need to be imagined about democratic life.

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*Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried  
Professionals and the Soul-Battering System  
That Shapes Their Lives*, by Jeff Schmidt, 2000.  
Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 293 pages.

“This book was stolen,” Jeff Schmidt announces in the opening sentence of the book. A Ph.D. in physics from the University of California at Irvine, he wrote *Disciplined Minds* in large part while on the job as an editor for *Physics Today* magazine. *Physics Today* responded, upon the book’s publication, by firing Schmidt, giving him a boost of attention for the book that it would not otherwise have received. Whether the attention was merited on the book’s rights is at issue.

Schmidt’s focus is professionals, which he defines roughly as salaried employees beneath a very thin stratum of real managers and bosses. His thesis is compelling, if not completely original: Managers are clued to the reality that escapes professionals in Schmidt’s schema.

Professionals think their work is largely self-directed, but in fact a continuous process of winnowing, indoctrination, and rewards of money and status shape their labor – and their thoughts, political persuasions, and loyalties – in the interest of bosses. We generally accept that education sets us free, but professional education, Schmidt holds, restricts this freedom to such a narrow range and such relatively trivial issues that it isn't a liberty that's worth much.

Schmidt is a very good writer, and particularly skilled at constructing his case through example and anecdote. For example, when American journalist Bernard Kalb left behind his four-decade vocation to become spokesman for the United States Department of State during the Reagan presidency, the seemingly cataclysmic shift from neutral reporter to partisan advocate and dissembler, hardly anyone in the administration or without expressed concern that he could serve a different philosophic master. Responsibility and considerable discretion came with Kalb's new job – but these were exercised within a very narrow value system, created by others, and one basically oppositional to his professional responsibilities of the previous day. While attorneys and PR flaks may be professionals whose viewpoints and narrow-band discretion are more obviously bought and sold, Schmidt holds that such is the case for all professionals, unless they become conscious of the circumstance and take remedial, subversive measures.

The book has weaknesses. Among them is the exhaustive – and exhausting – microscopic examination of professionalism and physics. The detailing of the field's symbiotic, money-laden relationship with the military-industrial complex is revealing. But after several chapters of focus on this circumstance, and the doctoral-studies tyranny that Schmidt endured in his own career, the reader wants to respond: "OK, OK, I get it. Let's move on." These sections of uncomfortably personal accusation can be lightly skimmed without losing the tread.

Other fields are touched upon so lightly or with such absolutism that Schmidt's case risks summary dismissal. Education is a prime example. Higher education is the handmaiden of the professional uniformity and subjugation in his grand unified theory. Colleges and universities are compared to the street scam of Three-Card Monte, a bait-and-switch operation in which high hopes dissolve because the mark doesn't know the game is rigged. Schmidt links this fraud to higher education through citation of 40-year-old, albeit groundbreaking,

work by education sociologist Burton R. Clark and his thesis that higher education “cools out” minorities and the poor by channeling them to institutions of low quality, or allowing them to enter and fail in better programs. Schmidt ignores the progress and diversity in higher education occurring over most of the last half century, and acknowledges not at all that there might be a few people in the broad enterprise of higher education who seek to remedy social and economic class inequities, rather than to perpetuate them.

(This being said, teacher education – particularly in our era of globalized standards, repetitive testing, and “teacher-proofing” of curricula – would have been a fascinating topic to examine through Schmidt’s lens, but it didn’t happen.)

Schmidt ends with discussions of how the professional or professional-in-training can maintain personal standards, a clear conscience, and allegiance to personal values. These are always good practices. But when Schmidt makes his case through point-by-point parallelism with the tactics of prisoner-of-war resistance as enunciated by the United States Army, he invites dismissal by the slightest extension of his metaphor. Professional training and practice are monoliths on a par with World War II axis powers or Saddam Hussein’s aggressions? Please.

In summary, Schmidt’s provocative case is made most strongly and eloquently in his first few chapters. Like a good lawyer, an archetype of Schmidt’s description, he should have known when the case was made and then rested.

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